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(54) **TELEVISION ADVERTISING FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A server may select an advertisement based on a location of a set-top box and information relating to television programming to be provided to the set-top box or being provided to set-top box. The server may further provide the selected advertisement to the set-top box for simultaneously displaying with the television programming.
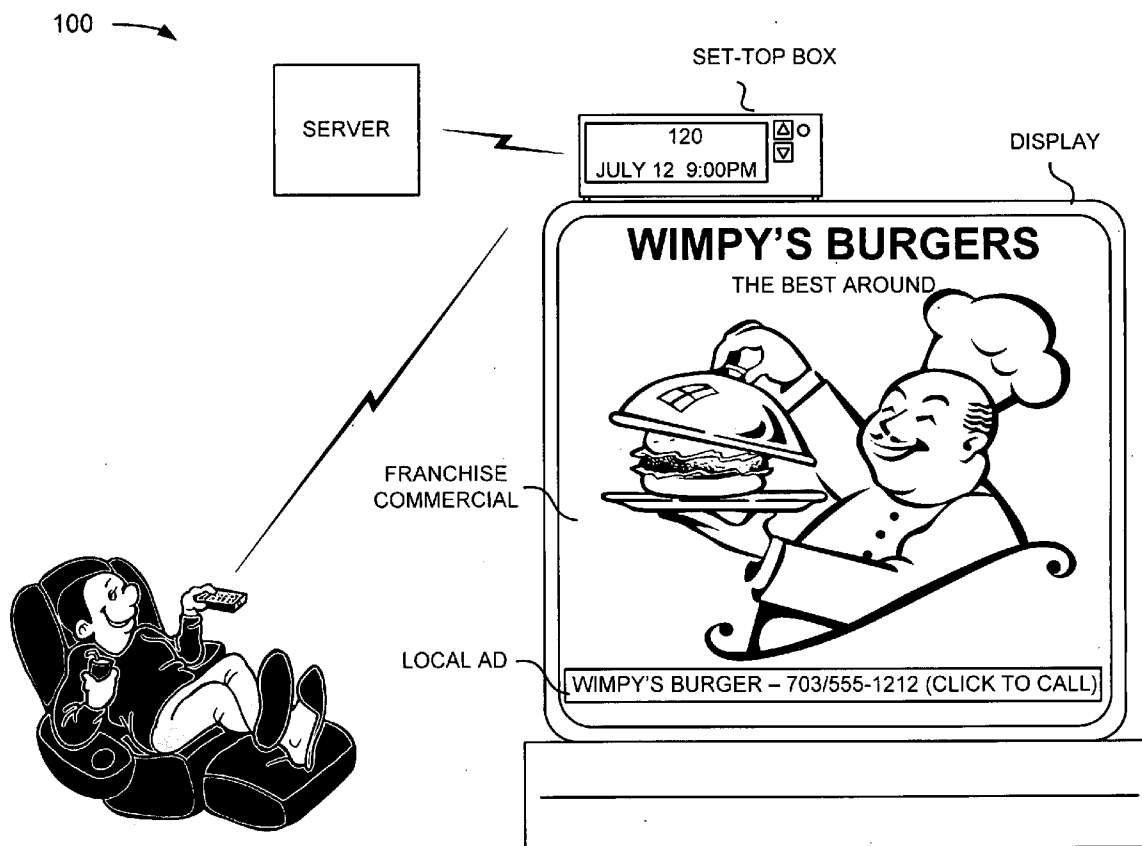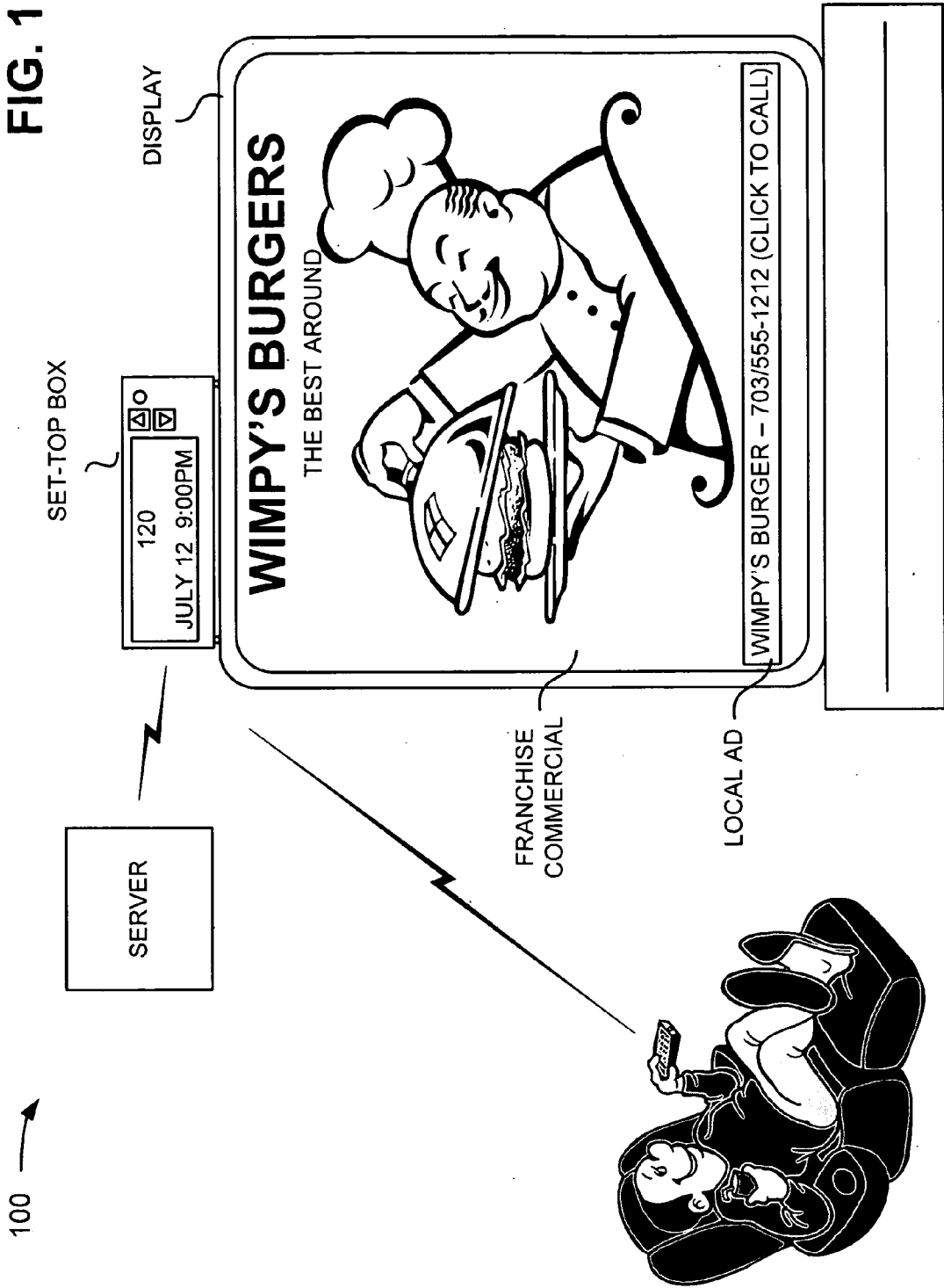
100

FIG. 1

200

SERVER
230

NETWORK
240

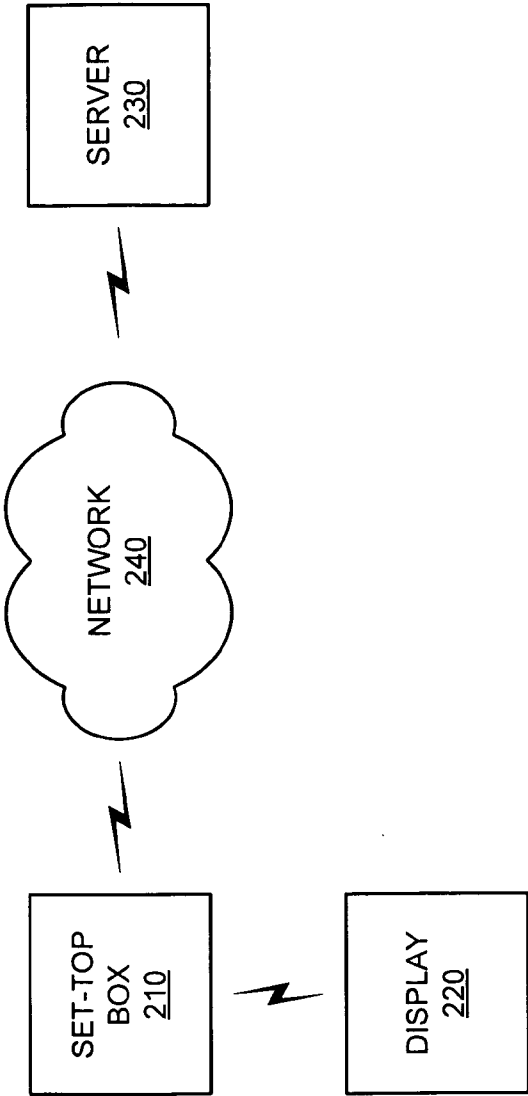SET-TOP
BOX
210

DISPLAY
220

FIG. 2

210

BUS
310

INPUT DEVICE
340

OUTPUT DEVICE
350

COMMUNICATION
INTERFACE
360

PROCESSING
LOGIC
320

MEMORY
330

FIG. 3

230

INPUT DEVICE
460

OUTPUT DEVICE
470

COMMUNICATION
INTERFACE
480

STORAGE
DEVICE
450

ROM
440

MAIN
MEMORY
430

BUS
410

PROCESSING
LOGIC
420
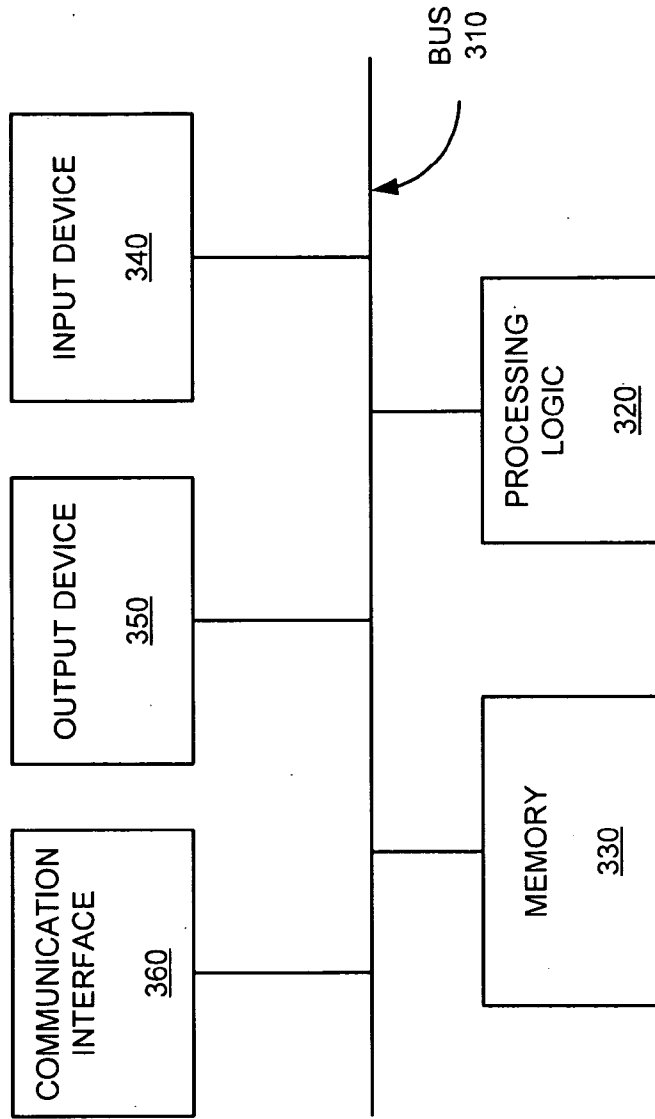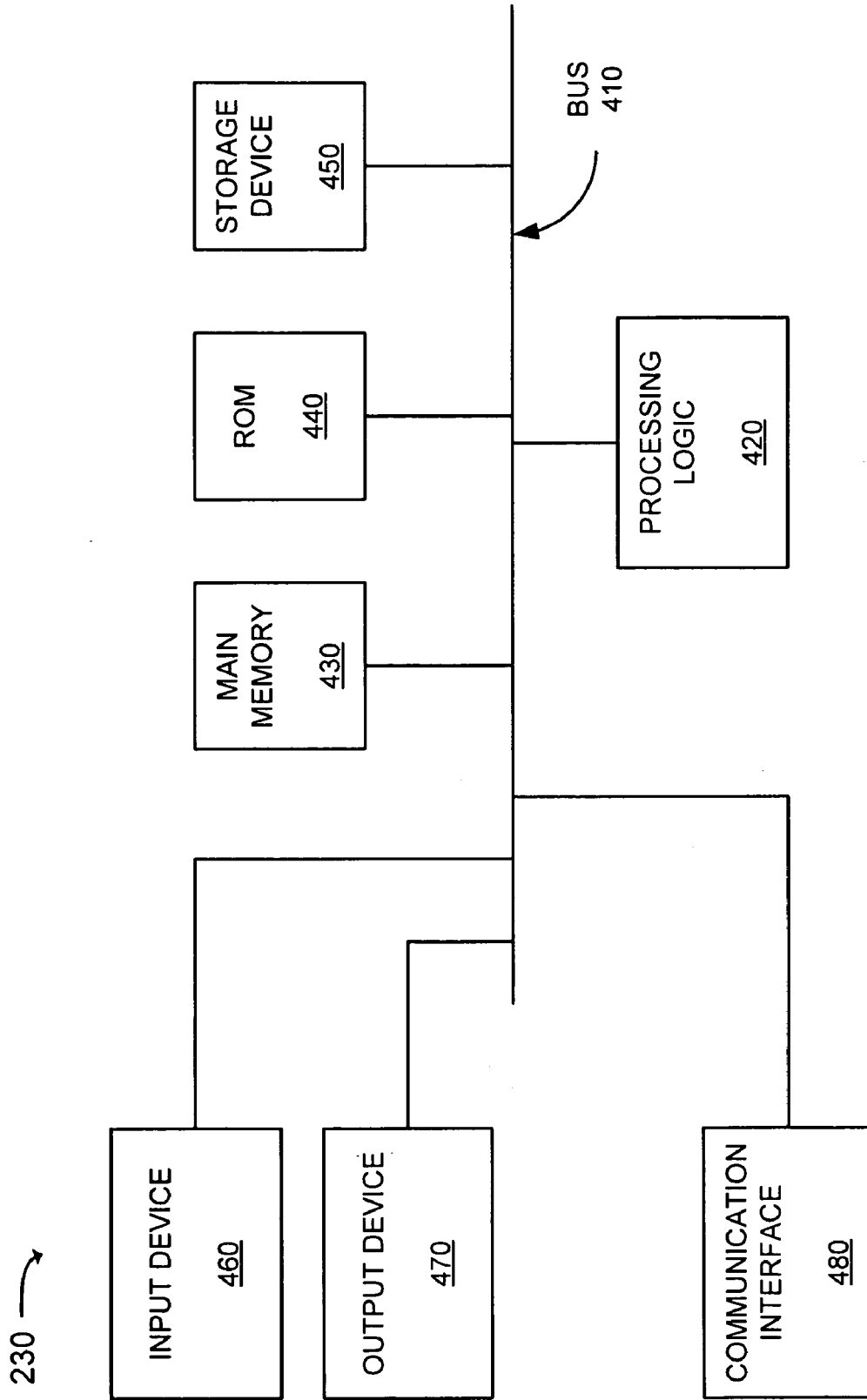
FIG. 4

500 ⟶

LOCATION 510	BUSINESS TYPE 520	BUSINESS NAME 530	BUSINESS INFO 540
15139	HARDWARE STORE	MOM AND POP HARDWARE	(555) 555-1212; WWW.LOCAL-WEBSITE.COM
LOCATION	TYPE	NAME	INFORMATION
LOCATION	TYPE	NAME	INFORMATION
LOCATION	TYPE	NAME	INFORMATION
···			
LOCATION	TYPE	NAME	INFORMATION

FIG. 5A

STB ID 560	LOCATION 570
123456ABC	15139
ID	LOCATION
ID	LOCATION
ID	LOCATION
⋯	⋯
ID	LOCATION

550

FIG. 5B

PROGRAM GUIDE AND ADVERTISING
INFORMATION DATABASE

580

FIG. 5C

FIG. 6

START

605 ⌇ RECEIVE SET-TOP BOX IDENTIFIER

610 ⌇ IDENTIFY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF SET-TOP BOX

615 ⌇ IDENTIFY AD BASED ON GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF SET-TOP BOX AND TELEVISION CONTENT

620 ⌇ PROVIDE IDENTIFIED AD TO SET-TOP BOX TO CAUSE AD TO BE DISPLAYED WITH CONTENT

625 ⌇ CALCULATE CHARGE BASED ON PROVIDING IDENTIFIED AD

FIG. 7

700

SERVER
230

710

220

210

MOM AND POP HARDWARE

SALE THIS WEEKEND
ON ALL HOME REPAIR
ITEMS

730

MOM AND POP HARDWARE – 555/555-1212
WWW.LOCAL-WEBSITE.COM

720

FIG. 8A

SERVER
230

810

210

220

800

820

THE HOME REPAIR SHOW

MOM AND POP HARDWARE – 555/555-1212
WWW.LOCAL-WEBSITE.COM – SALE THIS WEEKEND ON
ALL HOME REPAIR ITEMS (CLICK FOR MORE DETAILS)

FIG. 8B

800

SERVER
230

830

210

220

LOCATION: | http://www.local-website.com |

MOM AND POP HARDWARE

1234 NORTH FIRST STREET
OAKMONT, PA 15139

(555) 555-1212 (T)
(555) 555-1313 (F)

BIG SALE
THIS WEEKEND ONLY
ALL HOME REPAIR
ITEMS

DOCUMENT   DONE
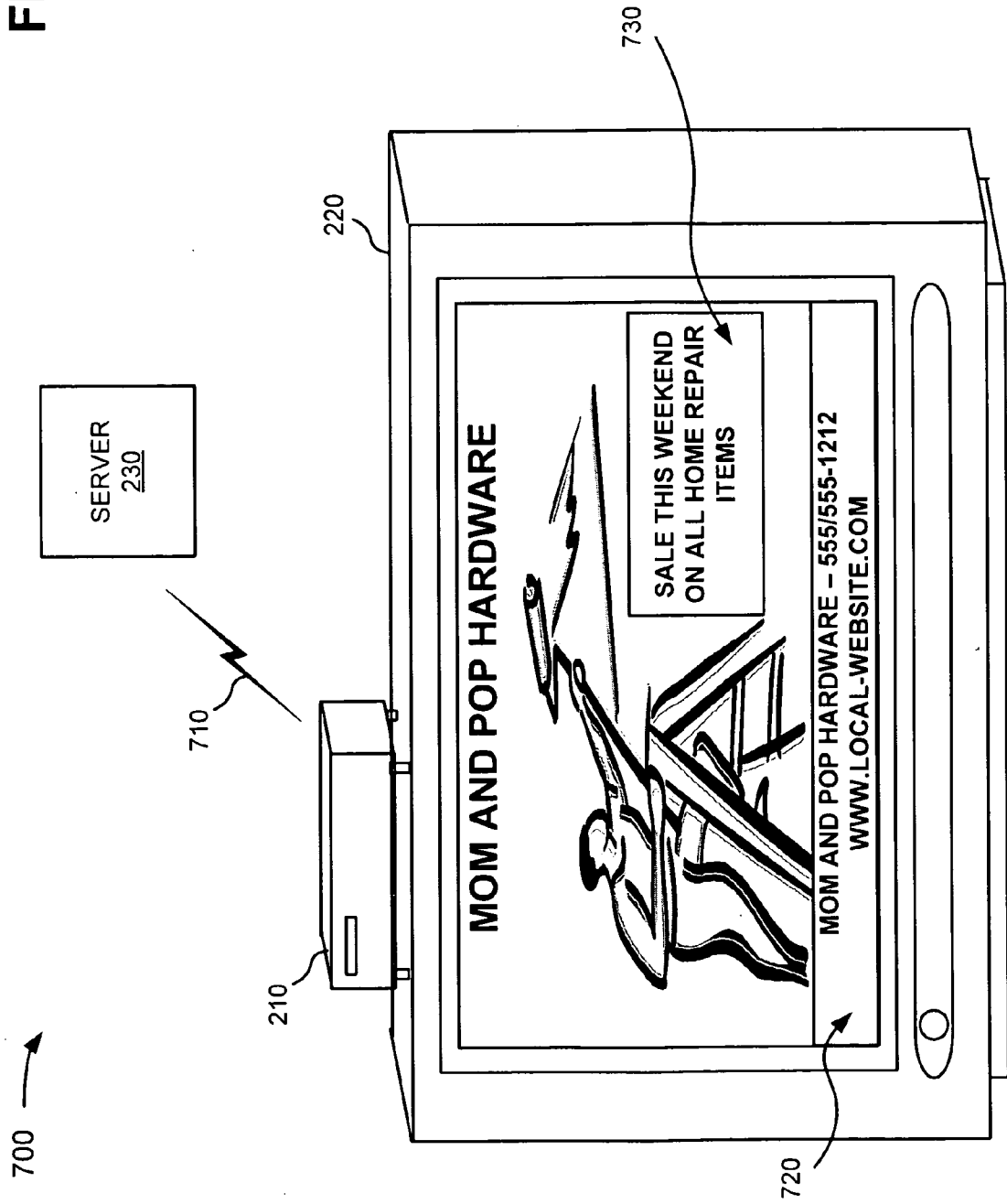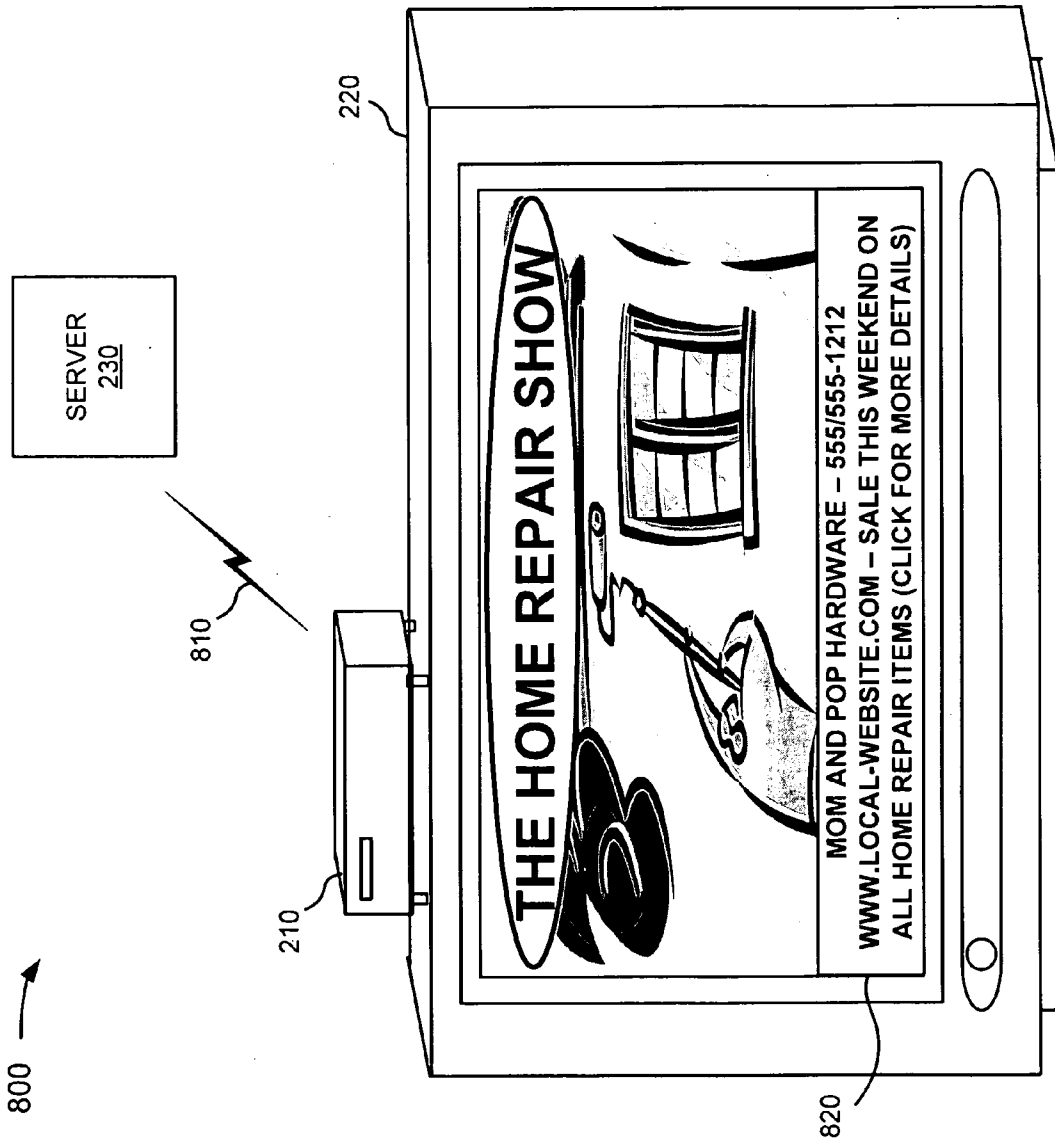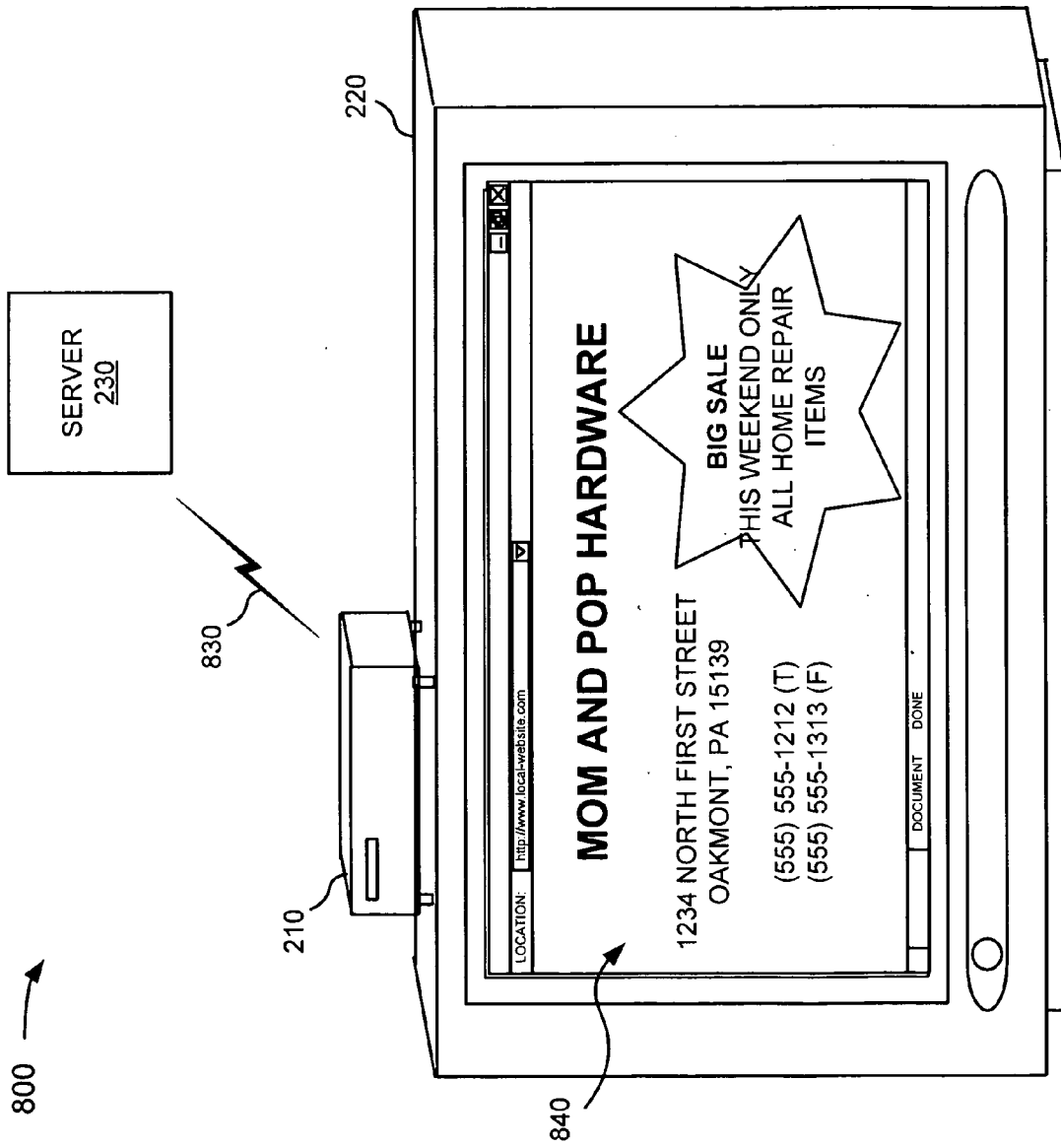
840

TELEVISION ADVERTISING FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[0001] Television distribution systems, such as fiber optic networks, cable networks, and satellite networks, provide viewers with a large number of television programs. Businesses purchase commercial time to provide television viewers with information regarding the businessess' products and services. These television commercials can be quite expensive. For example, a thirty second commercial during the 2009 Super Bowl is estimated to cost $3 million. Small business owners often cannot afford to purchase commercial time, especially during prime television viewing time and on prime television viewing channels.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0002] FIG. 1 is an exemplary diagram illustrating a concept described herein;

[0003] FIG. 2 is an exemplary network in which systems and/or methods, consistent with exemplary embodiments, may be implemented;

[0004] FIG. 3 is an exemplary block diagram of the set-top box of FIG. 2;

[0005] FIG. 4 is an exemplary block diagram of the server of FIG. 2;

[0006] FIGS. 5A-5C are portions of exemplary databases that may be associated with the server of FIG. 2;

[0007] FIG. 6 is a flow chart of exemplary processing for serving local business ads; and

[0008] FIGS. 7-8B illustrate examples of the processing described in FIG. 6.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0009] The following detailed description of exemplary embodiments refers to the accompanying drawings. The same reference numbers in different drawings may identify the same or similar elements. Also, the following detailed description does not limit the invention.

[0010] FIG. 1 is an exemplary diagram illustrating a concept 100 described herein. As illustrated, a set-top box may be associated with a display. In one embodiment, the set-top box may receive television programming (including, for example, television shows, sporting events, movies, commercials, and/or other types of television content) from a server. In one embodiment, the server may cause local business advertisements (also referred to hereinafter as "ads") to be displayed to a user while television programming is displayed to the user.

[0011] As illustrated in FIG. 1, for example, while a television commercial for a franchise burger restaurant (i.e., "Wimpy's Burgers") is being provided to a user, the server may cause an ad for a local Wimpy's Burgers restaurant to be provided. The local ad may include information about the local Wimpy's Burgers restaurant, such as a telephone number, an address, a web site address, one or more specials provided at the restaurant, etc. The local ad may be provided in a static manner, as illustrated in FIG. 1, or a dynamic manner in which, for example, the local ad changes, scrolls across the screen, etc. while the commercial is being displayed. The location at which the local ad is provided on the display may be configurable.

[0012] In one embodiment, the user may interact with the local ad (e.g., via the set-top box). For example, the user may select the local ad to cause a telephone call to be placed to the local Wimpy's Burgers restaurant, cause a web site for the local Wimpy's Burgers restaurant to be displayed, etc.

[0013] Via local ads, small business owners may provide advertising information to television viewers without the need to produce expensive commercials or purchase expensive commercial time. In one embodiment, the small business owners may be charged on a per impression basis (i.e., each time a set-top box causes the small business owners' local ads to be displayed).

[0014] FIG. 2 is an exemplary network 200 in which systems and/or methods, consistent with exemplary embodiments, may be implemented. As illustrated, network 200 may include a set-top box 210, a display 220, a server 230, and a network 240. The number of set-top boxes 210, displays 220, servers 230, and networks 240 illustrated in FIG. 2 is provided for simplicity. In practice, there may be more set-top boxes 210, displays 220, servers 230, and/or networks 240. Moreover, in some embodiments, one or more devices in FIG. 2 may perform the functions described as being performed by one or more other devices illustrated in FIG. 2.

[0015] Set-top box 210 may include a device that receives television programming and provides the television programming to display 220. Set-top box 210 may further allow a user to alter the television programming provided to display 220 based on a signal (e.g., a channel up or channel down signal) from, for example, a remote control (not shown). In one embodiment, set-top box 210 may cause local ads to be provided to display 220 simultaneously with television programming. Set-top box 210 may also allow a user to interact with the local ads.

[0016] Display 220 may include any type of display that is capable of displaying television programming. Display 220 may be implemented as a stand-alone device and/or may be integrated into another device. In one embodiment, some or all of the functions described as being performed by set-top box 210 may be performed by display 220.

[0017] Server 230 may include a server entity. An entity may be defined as a device, such as a computer or another type of computation or communication device, a thread or process running on one of these devices, and/or an object executable by one of these devices. In one embodiment, server 230 may receive information from set-top box 210 and may provide information, such as television programming and local ads, to set-top box 210.

[0018] Network 240 may include one or more networks of any type, including a Public Land Mobile Network (PLMN), a Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), a local area network (LAN), a metropolitan area network (MAN), a wide area network (WAN), a private network, the Internet, an intranet, and/or another type of network.

[0019] FIG. 3 is an exemplary block diagram of set-top box 210. As illustrated, set-top box 210 may include a bus 310, processing logic 320, a memory 330, an input device 340, an output device 350, and a communication interface 360. It will be appreciated that set-top box 210 may include additional (or other) components than illustrated in FIG. 3.

[0020] Bus 310 may include a path that permits communication among the elements of set-top box 210. Processing logic 320 may include a processor, microprocessor, or other type of processing logic, such as an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), field programmable gate array

(FPGA), etc., that may interpret and execute instructions. Memory **330** may include a random access memory (RAM) or another type of dynamic storage device that may store information and instructions for execution by processing logic **320**, read only memory (ROM) or another type of static storage device that may store static information and instructions for use by processing logic **320**, and/or another type of storage device.

[0021] Input device **340** may include a mechanism that permits an operator to input information to set-top box **210**, such as buttons or a touch-screen interface. Output device **350** may include a mechanism that outputs information to the operator, such as a display. Communication interface **360** may include any transceiver-like mechanism that enables set-top box **210** to receive and/or send information from/to other devices and/or systems, such as display **220**, server **230**, a remote control, one or more entertainment components (e.g., a speaker, a video recorder, etc.), etc.

[0022] As will be described in detail below, set-top box **210** may perform certain operations. Set-top box **210** may perform these, and other operations, in response to processing logic **320** executing software instructions contained in a computer-readable medium, such as memory **330**. A computer-readable medium may be defined as a physical or logical memory device.

[0023] The software instructions may be read into memory **330** from another computer-readable medium or from another device via communication interface **360**. The software instructions contained in memory **330** may cause processing logic **320** to perform processes that will be described later. Alternatively, hardwired circuitry may be used in place of, or in combination with, software instructions to implement processes consistent with exemplary embodiments. Thus, embodiments described herein are not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software.

[0024] FIG. **4** is an exemplary diagram of server **230** according to an exemplary embodiment. As illustrated, server **230** may include a bus **410**, processing logic **420**, a main memory **430**, a ROM **440**, a storage device **450**, an input device **460**, an output device **470**, and a communication interface **480**. It will be appreciated that server **230** may include additional (or other) components than illustrated in FIG. **4**.

[0025] Bus **410** may include a path that permits communication among the elements of server **230**. Processing logic **420** may include a processor, microprocessor, or other type of processing logic, such as an ASIC, FPGA, etc., that may interpret and execute instructions. Main memory **430** may include a RAM or another type of dynamic storage device that may store information and instructions for execution by processing logic **420**. ROM **440** may include a ROM device or another type of static storage device that may store static information and instructions for use by processing logic **420**. Storage device **450** may include a magnetic and/or optical recording medium and its corresponding drive.

[0026] Input device **460** may include a mechanism that permits an operator to input information to server **230**, such as a keyboard, a mouse, a pen, voice recognition and/or biometric mechanisms, a touch-screen interface, etc. Output device **470** may include a mechanism that outputs information to the operator, including a display, a printer, a speaker, etc. Communication interface **480** may include any transceiver-like mechanism that enables server **230** to communicate with other devices and/or systems, such as set-top box **210**.

[0027] As will be described in detail below, server **230** may perform certain operations. Server **230** may perform these, and other operations, in response to processing logic **420** executing software instructions contained in a computer-readable medium, such as main memory **430**.

[0028] The software instructions may be read into main memory **430** from another computer-readable medium, such as storage device **450**, or from another device via communication interface **480**. The software instructions contained in main memory **430** may cause processing logic **420** to perform processes that will be described later. Alternatively, hardwired circuitry may be used in place of, or in combination with, software instructions to implement processes consistent with exemplary embodiments. Thus, embodiments described herein are not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software.

[0029] FIG. **5A** is a portion an exemplary database **500** that may be associated with server **230**. While only one database is described below, database **500** may include multiple databases stored locally at server **230**, or stored at one or more different and possibly remote locations.

[0030] As illustrated, database **500** may maintain a group of entries in the following exemplary fields: a location field **510**, a business type field **520**, a business name field **530**, and a business information (INFO) field **540**. Database **500** may maintain additional or different information (not shown) that aids in identifying a local ad. For example, database **500** may further store information indicating what information is to be provided in a local ad (e.g., telephone number, web site address, physical address, information regarding a sale of one or more items, etc.), one or more time periods at which the local ad may be provided, the manner in which the local ad may be provided (e.g., as a static ad, as a scrolling ad, special effects with which the local ad is to be provided, etc.), and/or other information. Alternatively, some or all of this information may be stored in business information field **540**.

[0031] Location field **510** may store information that identifies a geographical location of the business identified in business name field **530**. The location information may include, for example, a zip code, a city and state, a street address, a set of latitude and longitude coordinates, etc. Business type field **520** may store information that identifies a type (or category) of business for the business identified in business name field **530**. In one example, the information in field **520** may be defined broadly, such as "restaurant," or more narrowly, such as "Mexican restaurant." Business name field **530** may store information identifying the name of a business. Business information field **540** may store information relating to the business identified in business name field **510**. The information in field **540** may include, for example, a telephone number, a network address (such as a web site address, an electronic mail message address, an instant messenger address, etc.), a physical address, and/or other information relating to the business. As an example, database **500** may store information for a business called "Mom and Pop Hardware," which is a hardware store located in zip code 15139. Database **500** may also store a telephone number (i.e., 555/555-1212) and a web site address (www.local-website.com) for the business.

[0032] FIG. **5B** is a portion another exemplary database **550** that may be associated with server **230**. While only one database is described below, database **550** may include multiple databases stored locally at server **230**, or stored at one or more different and possibly remote locations.

[0033] As illustrated, database 550 may maintain a group of entries in the following exemplary fields: a set-top box (STB) identification (ID) field 560 and a location field 570. Database 550 may maintain additional or different information (not shown) that aids in identifying a location of a set-top box.

[0034] Set-top box identification field 560 may store information that identifies a set-top box. The identification information may include a sequence of characters that uniquely identifies a set-top box. Location field 570 may store information that identifies a geographical location of the set-top box identified in set-top box identification field 560. As an example, database 550 may store an entry that indicates that the set-top box, having an identifier of "123456ABC," is located in zip code 15139.

[0035] FIG. 5C is a portion of yet another exemplary database 580 that may be associated with server 230. While only one database is described below, database 580 may include multiple databases stored locally at server 230, or stored at one or more different and possibly remote locations.

[0036] As illustrated, database 580 may maintain program guide and advertising information. For example, database 580 may store information identifying television programming (e.g., the name of the television programming, a category of the television programming, content of the television programming, etc.) and the time at which the television programming will be provided to users. As indicated above, the television programming may include any type of programming content that may be provided to a set-top box and/or television. Database 580 may store additional information that may aid server 230 in identifying a local ad to provide to a user.

[0037] FIG. 6 is a flow chart of exemplary processing for serving local business ads. In one embodiment, the processing of FIG. 6 may be performed by server 230. In another embodiment, some or all of the processing of FIG. 6 may be performed by another device or a combination of devices, including or excluding server 230.

[0038] Processing may begin with server 230 receiving a set-top box identifier (block 605). In one embodiment, set-top box 210 may transmit the identifier automatically when, for example, set-top box 210 is turned on or at other times. In another embodiment, set-top box 210 may transmit the identifier in response to a command from server 230 or a user.

[0039] Server 230 may identify a geographical location of set-top box 210 (block 610). In one embodiment, server 230 may use the received set-top box identifier to obtain the geographical location of set-top box 210. For example, server 230 may access database 550 and, using the received set-top box identifier as an index, may look up the location of set-top box 210 in location field 570.

[0040] Server 230 may identify a local ad based on the identified geographical location of set-top box 210 and the television programming being provided or to be provided to set-top box 210 (block 615). In one embodiment, server 230 may use the geographical location of set-top box 210 and information relating to the television programming to identify a local business for which a local ad is to be provided. For example, server 230 may access database 580 to obtain information relating to the television programming that is being provided or will be provided to set-top box 210. The obtained information may include, for example, the name of the business associated with a commercial that is being provided or will be provided, the name of a television show that is being provided or will be provided, the type of television show that

is being provided or will be provided (e.g., that the television show is a home repair show), the content of the television show that is being provided or will be provided (e.g., that the television show will be focused on a particular type or make of automobile), and/or other types of information that may used in matching a local ad to the television programming. Server 230 may use the information relating to the television programming and the geographical location of set-top box 210 to select (e.g., from database 500) the local ad. In this way, an ad for a business, which is relevant to the television programming that is being provided or will be provided to set-top box 210, and which is in the geographical vicinity of set-top box 210, may be selected.

[0041] The matching of a local ad to television programming may be performed before receiving the set-top box identifier or in near real time as television programming is being provided to set-top box 210. For example, server 230 may match local ads and television programming seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, or months before the television programming is to be provided. Alternatively, the programming content may be detected in near real time based on the video stream to be provided to set-top box 210 and/or a text stream that may be associated with the video stream. Thus, server 230 may, for example, in near real time, obtain information relating to television programming to be provided to set-top box 210 and may identify a local ad based on the obtained information.

[0042] Server 230 may provide the identified local ad to the set-top box 210 to cause the local ad to be displayed on display 220 (block 620). In one embodiment, server 230 may generate a message and may provide the local ad in the message to set-top box 210. The message may include not only the local ad to be provided, but may also include other information, such as the location on display 220 at which the local ad is to be displayed, the manner in which the local ad is to be displayed (e.g., as a static ad, in a scroll bar, the special effects to be used in displaying the local ad, etc.), and/or other types of information.

[0043] Server 230 may calculate a charge for providing the local ad (block 625). In one embodiment, the business with which the local ad is associated may be charged a fixed amount for each ad impression (i.e., each time the ad is provided to a set-top box). In another embodiment, the business with which the local ad is associated may be charged a different amount for ad impressions based on the television programming with which the local ad is provided. Other billing arrangements may alternatively be used.

[0044] The following examples of FIGS. 7-8B illustrate the processing described above with respect to FIG. 6. In a first example 700 described with respect to FIG. 7, it may be assumed that a user is watching a television commercial for Mom and Pop Hardware, a national hardware chain. Server 230 may use databases 550 and 500 to identify an ad for a local Mom and Pop Hardware store to provide while the television commercial is being provided. For example, server 230 may use an identifier associated with set-top box 210 to determine a location of set-top box 210 from, for example, field 570 of database 550. Server 230 may further use the location of set-top box 210 and information relating to the television commercial (e.g., the name of the business associated with the television commercial) to identify a local ad from, for example, database 500. Thus, with reference to the exemplary entry in database 500 (FIG. 5A) and assuming that the location of set-top box 210 is in zip code 15139, server

230 may identify, based on the name of the business associated with the television commercial and the location of set-top box **210**, the local Mom and Pop Hardware store, which is located in the same zip code as set-top box **210**, as a business in the vicinity of set-top box **210**. Thus, server **230** may retrieve the contents of business information field **540** from database **500** for providing in a local ad.

[0045] Server **230** may provide a message **710** to set-top box **210** that causes the local ad to be displayed while the television commercial is playing. Thus, as illustrated in FIG. 7, an ad **720** for a local Mom and Pop Hardware store may be superimposed on top of the television commercial or placed in a position so as not to obscure the user's view of the television commercial. In one embodiment, message **710** may cause multiple local ads to be simultaneously displayed. For example, as illustrated in FIG. 7, message **710** may cause a first ad **720** to be displayed that includes contact information for the local Mom and Pop Hardware store and a second ad **730** to be displayed in a different location in display **220** that includes additional information relating to the local business. In example **700**, second ad **730** may include information about a sale at the local Mom and Pop Hardware store. In other embodiments, ads **720** and **730** may be provided in a single location (e.g., as part of a scrolling ad). Selection of local ad **720** or **730** may cause, for example, a telephone call to be placed to the local Mom and Pop Hardware store or a web page for the local Mom and Pop Hardware store to be provided to the user.

[0046] As a second example **800** set forth in FIGS. **8**A and **8**B, it may be assumed that a user is watching a television show, entitled "The Home Repair Show." Server **230** may use databases **550** and **500** to identify a local ad (e.g., that relates to the television show) to provide while the television show is being provided. For example, server **230** may use an identifier associated with set-top box **210** to determine a location of set-top box **210** from field **570** of database **550**. Server **230** may further use the location of set-top box **210** and information relating to the television show (e.g., the content of the television show or the category of television show) to identify a local ad from, for example, database **500**. Thus, with reference to the exemplary entry in database **500** (FIG. **5**A) and assuming that the location of set-top box **210** is in zip code 15139, server **230** may identify, based on the content or category of the television show "The Home Repair Show" and the location of set-top box **210**, the local Mom and Pop Hardware store, which is located in the same zip code as set-top box **210**, as a business in the vicinity of set-top box and relating to the television show. Thus, server **230** may retrieve the contents of business information field **540** from database **500** for providing in a local ad.

[0047] Server **230** may provide a message **810** to set-top box **210** that causes the local ad to be displayed while the television show is playing. Thus, as illustrated in FIG. **8**A, a local ad **820** for the local Mom and Pop Hardware store may be superimposed on top of the television show or placed in a position so as not to obscure the user's view of the television show. In example **800**, it may be assumed that local ad **820** allows the user to obtain additional information from the Mom and Pop Hardware store's web site. Assume that the user desires additional information about the ongoing sale (identified in local ad **820**) and clicks on local ad **820** using, for example, the user's remote control. As a result, set-top box **210** may send a request for the web site to server **230**. Server **230** may send a message **830** to set-top box **210** that causes a web page **840** associated with Mom and Pop Hardware store's web site to be displayed on display **220**, as illustrated in FIG. **8**B.

[0048] Embodiments described herein may cause ads for local businesses to be simultaneously displayed with television programming. A server may identify an ad for a local business that relates to television programming being provided to a set-top box and may cause the ad to be provided while the television programming is being provided to the set-top box. In this way, local businesses may advertise to television viewers, without having to incur the cost of expensive commercials.

[0049] The foregoing description of exemplary embodiments provides illustration and description, but is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. Modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings or may be acquired from practice of the invention. For example, while a series of acts has been described with respect to FIG. **6**, the order of the acts may be varied in other implementations consistent with the invention. Moreover, non-dependent acts may be implemented in parallel.

[0050] The exemplary embodiments, as described above, may be implemented in many different forms of software, firmware, and hardware in the implementations illustrated in the figures. The actual software code or specialized control hardware used to implement the exemplary embodiments described herein is not limiting of the invention. Thus, the operation and behavior of the exemplary embodiments were described without reference to the specific software code—it being understood that one would be able to design software and control hardware to implement the exemplary embodiments based on the description herein.

[0051] Further, certain portions of the invention may be implemented as "logic" that performs one or more functions. This logic may include hardware, such as an application specific integrated circuit, a field programmable gate array, a processor, or a microprocessor, or a combination of hardware and software.

[0052] Even though particular combinations of features are recited in the claims and/or disclosed in the specification, these combinations are not intended to limit the invention. In fact, many of these features may be combined in ways not specifically recited in the claims and/or disclosed in the specification.

[0053] No element, act, or instruction used in the description of the present application should be construed as critical or essential to the invention unless explicitly described as such. Also, as used herein, the article "a" is intended to include one or more items. Where only one item is intended, the term "one" or similar language is used. Further, the phrase "based on" is intended to mean "based, at least in part, on" unless explicitly stated otherwise.

What is claimed is:

1. A server comprising:

a memory to store instructions; and

a processor to:

receive information identifying a set-top box,

obtain information identifying a location of the set-top box using the information identifying the set-top box,

select an advertisement to provide to the set-top box using the information identifying the location of the set-top box and television programming that is being provided or will be provided to the set-top box, and

provide the advertisement to the set-top box for display with the television programming.

2. The server of claim 1, where the television programming includes a television commercial that is associated with a business, and

where, when selecting the advertisement, the processor is configured to:

select the advertisement that is associated with a location of the business that is in a geographical vicinity of the set-top box.

3. The server of claim 1, where the television programming is associated with content, and

where, when selecting the advertisement, the processor is configured to:

select the advertisement based on the content and the obtained location of the set-top box.

4. The server of claim 1, where, when providing the advertisement to the set-top box, the processor is configured to:

generate a message that includes the selected advertisement and information relating to a display of the selected advertisement, and

transmit the message to the set-top box.

5. The server of claim 4, where the information relating to the display of the selected advertisement includes information that causes the selected advertisement to be statically displayed while the television programming is being displayed.

6. The server of claim 4, where the information relating to the display of the selected advertisement includes information that causes the selected advertisement to be displayed in a scroll bar while the television programming is being displayed.

7. The server of claim 4, where the information relating to the display of the selected advertisement includes information that causes the selected advertisement to be superimposed on a particular portion of the television programming as the television programming is being displayed.

8. The server of claim 1, where the selected advertisement is associated with a business and includes at least one of:

a telephone number of the business,

a network address of the business, or

information relating to a sale at the business.

9. A method comprising:

receiving information identifying a set-top box;

obtaining information identifying a location of the set-top box using the information identifying the set-top box;

selecting an advertisement using the information identifying the location of the set-top box and information relating to television programming that is being provided or will be provided to the set-top box; and

providing the advertisement to the set-top box for display simultaneously with the television programming.

10. The method of claim 9, where the information identifying the location of the set-top box is obtained from a first database that associates identifiers of set-top boxes with locations of the set-top boxes.

11. The method of claim 10, where the advertisement is selected from a second database that associates contact information for businesses with information identifying locations of the businesses and at least one of names of the businesses or business types with which the businesses are associated.

12. The method of claim 9, where the television programming includes a television commercial that is associated with a business, and

where the selecting the advertisement includes:

selecting the advertisement that is associated with a location of the business that is in a geographical vicinity of the set-top box.

13. The method of claim 9, where the television programming is associated with content, and

where the selecting the advertisement includes:

selecting the advertisement based on the content and the obtained information identifying the location of the set-top box.

14. The method of claim 9, where the providing the advertisement to the set-top box includes:

generating a message that includes the selected advertisement and information relating to a display of the selected advertisement, and

transmitting the message to the set-top box.

15. The method of claim 14, where the information relating to the display of the selected advertisement includes at least one of:

information that causes the selected advertisement to be statically displayed while the television programming is being displayed, or

information that causes the selected advertisement to be displayed in a scroll bar while the television programming is being displayed.

16. The method of claim 9, where the selected advertisement is associated with a business, and

where the method further comprises:

calculating a charge for the business for providing the advertisement to the set-top box.

17. A system comprising:

a server to:

select an advertisement based on a location of a set-top box and information relating to television programming to be provided to the set-top box or being provided to set-top box, and

provide the selected advertisement to the set-top box for simultaneously displaying with the television programming.

18. The system of claim 17, where, when providing the selected advertisement to the set-top box, the server is configured to:

generate a message that includes the selected advertisement and information relating to a display of the selected advertisement, and

transmit the message to the set-top box.

19. The system of claim 18, where the information relating to the display of the selected advertisement includes at least one of:

information that causes the selected advertisement to be statically displayed while the television programming is being displayed, or

information that causes the selected advertisement to be displayed in a scroll bar while the television programming is being displayed.

20. The system of claim 18, where the message further includes information that at least one of:

causes the set-top box to establish a telephone call when the advertisement is selected by a user, or

causes the set-top box to send a request for a web page when the advertisement is selected by a user.

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